

AH230 Art and War

Room P98A Seminar Room 4
Seminar Leader: Dr. Gregor Quack
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Office Hours: Tuesday, 12:00-14:00, or by appointment

Course Description

The link between the visual arts and armed conflict is as old as the concept of art itself. Art objects have long been used to celebrate past military victories or as symbolic and psychological weapons. Time and again, artists and their works have been targets and victims of wartime devastation. In the history of Western art, new, pompous monuments of victory are as much a part of Western art history as recurring episodes of looting and iconoclasm.

This seminar will explore how the centuries-old connection between carnage and creation has been both sustained and transformed since the early days of modernism in the mid-19th century, a period that not only gave birth to the grand ambitions of the "total work of art," but also to the unprecedented destructive power unleashed by "total war." From there, we will discuss if and how changes in artistic thought can be correlated with ever-changing weaponry and imperial geopolitical constellations, from the early days of industrialized armaments to the complex, digital, and highly asymmetrical battlefields of the present. What happened to older forms, such as the monument, in an era when many realized that there was little to celebrate in the victories won in wars that teetered on the brink of nuclear annihilation? Should the preservation of cultural and artistic heritage change its tactics depending on where the threats come from? Is the difference between propaganda and activist art just a matter of perspective?

While global in scope, the seminar will anchor our analysis of archives, artworks, and artists in Berlin. While attempting to be as analytical and objective as the highly charged subject matter allows, we will discuss many difficult works of art. Sessions will include many works that resist the violence of war and register its psychological effects and traumas, as well as those practices that may have been consciously or inadvertently complicit in efforts to promote the destruction of human life. While such a broad scope is necessary to provide a full and honest overview of the seminar's theme, the syllabus will allow ample room for those students whose personal experiences or expertise mean that a slightly different path of study will better serve their scholarly growth. The syllabus will include at least one field trip and critical discussion of a museum exhibition, and two class visits to contemporary artists with whom we will discuss their work and its potential relationship to the week's readings. Students will be encouraged and supported to pursue their own research in the many fields of art.

Requirements

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the

expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assessment

Each student must give one classroom presentation and write two papers.

The mid-term essay (2000 words) is due on March 22, midnight.

The final essay (3000 words) is due on May 15, midnight.

Essays should include footnotes/references, bibliography and a list of illustrations. The structure and draft of your essays can be discussed in individual tutorials.

Submission of Papers / Discussions

Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded by a half grade (from B+ to C+, for example). After than additional 24 hours of delay will incur another half grade downgrade. After 72 hours, no additional essays will be accepted.

Whenever students suspect they will be unable to meet the deadline, they are advised to contact the instructor immediately.

Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are entitled and encouraged to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

The grade breakdown for this seminar will be as follows:

Final essay (3000 words): 40%

Midterm essay (2000 words): 20%

Participation (including one classroom presentation): 30%

Participation / Preparation

Students are expected to prepare for class discussions. At a minimum, this preparation will include reading the week's required readings and as much of the recommended readings as possible. After class each week, the instructor will circulate a list of artists and works that will be discussed the following week. Students should familiarize themselves with these works by looking closely at reproductions, finding historical and biographical information about the

artists and their times, and writing down at least one or two questions or topics to discuss in class.

Recommended Textbooks:

All readings will be available in digital format and will be emailed to the class shortly after the end of the previous week's class. Students are not required to purchase any books for this course.

Several assigned readings in this course will stem from one of the following books. In each case, the assigned texts will be provided to students in pdf format. However, some of these edited volumes will be useful starting points to follow the course's ideas in your own way. Students might also find that it is helpful to have a copy of *Art Since 1900* or *Art in Theory* at hand in their future art historical research:

Bourke, Joanna. *War and Art: A Visual History of Modern Conflict*. Reaktion Books, 2017. (WA)

Brandon, Laura. *Art and War*. Art And. London: I. B. Tauris, 2007. (AW)

Presiado, Mor, and Frank Jacob, eds. *War and Art: The Portrayal of Destruction and Mass Violence*. War (Hi)Stories, vol. 8. Paderborn: Brill, Ferdinand Schöningh, 2020.

Foster, Hal, Rosalind Krauss, Benjamin Buchloh, David Joselit, and Yve-Alain Bois. *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*. Third edition. London: Thames & Hudson, 2016. (AS1900)

Harrison, Charles, and Paul Wood, eds. *Art in Theory, 1900 - 2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*. New edition, 20. Malden, MA&Oxford&Carlton, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2018. (AIT)

Schedule

Week 1

Tuesday, January 30, 2024

Introduction: From Small Wars to Total War, from 19th to 20th century.

Read:

Goya, Francisco José de. *The Disasters of War (1863)*. Edited by Philip Hofer. New York, NY: Dover, 1967.

Browse:

Bourke, Joanna. "War Imagery between the Crimean Campaign and 1914." In *War and Art: A Visual History of Modern Conflict*. Reaktion Books, 2017.

Recommended:

Clark, Kenneth. "Goya's War Art." In *The Romantic Rebellion: Romantic versus Classic Art, 178–192*. New York: Harper & Row, 1973.

Week 2

February 6, 2024

Pro-War Modernism / Futurism

Read:

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism," 1909 (AIT)

Excerpt from Berghaus, Günter. *Futurism and Politics: Between Anarchist Rebellion and Fascist Reaction, 1909 - 1944*. Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1996.

Recommended:

Excerpt from Daly, Selena. "How to Seduce Soldiers: Futurist Propaganda and Politics." In *Italian Futurism and the First World War*, 115–45. University of Toronto Press, 2016.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/j.ctv1005djw.9>.

Week 3

February 13, 2024

Anti-War Avantgarde / Dada and others

Read:

Andre Breton, Diego Rivera, and Leon Trotsky, 'Towards a Free Revolutionary Art' (AIT) (1939) (AIT)

Browse:

Excerpt from Rasula, Jed. *Destruction Was My Beatrice: Dada and the Unmaking of the Twentieth Century*. New York: Basic Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group, 2015.

Recommended:

Biro, Matthew. "The Militarized Cyborg: Soldier Portraits, War Cripples, and the Deconstruction of the Authoritarian Subject." In *The Dada Cyborg: Visions of the New Human in Weimar Berlin*, 153–99. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

Week 4

February 20, 2024

Art, Fascism, and the Second World War, Part 1

Read:

Excerpts from Barron, Stephanie, and Maurice Tuchman. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991.

Recommended:

Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott, Verso 2020 edition, Radical Thinkers (London New York: Verso, 2020).

Week 5

February 27, 2024

Art, Fascism, and the Second World War, Part 2

Read:

Adolf Hitler, 'Speech Inaugerating the Great Exhibition of German Art' (1937) (AIT)

Clement Greenberg "Avant-Garde and Kitch" (AIT)

Browse:

Barron, Stephanie, and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, eds. *Exiles + Emigrés: The Flight of European Artists from Hitler*. New York: Abrams, 1997.

Recommended

Excerpt from: Hewitt, Andrew. *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford Univ. Press, 1996.

Excerpt from Ades, Dawn. "Art and Power: Europe Under the Dictators, 1930-45." The Hayward Gallery, 1995.

Week 6

March 5, 2024

The Cultural Cold War 1: West (documenta, Abstract Expressionism)

Read:

Clyfford Still, 'Statement', 1952 (AIT)

George Dondero, From The Congressional Record, 1949 (AIT)

Excerpt from Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., The Politics of Freedom, 1950 (AIT)

Alfred J. Barr, 'Is Modern Art Communistic', 1952 (AIT)

Browse:

Brandon, Laura. "The Second World War: Four Allied National Programmes." In *Art and War*, 59–74. Art And. London: I. B. Tauris, 2007.

Recommended:

Guilbaut, Serge. *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

Week 7

March 12, 2024

The Cultural Cold War 2: East (Socialism Realism)

Read:

Vladimir Lenin "On Proletarian Culture", 1920 (AIT)

Exhibition Visit:

„Extreme Tension / Zerreiprobe“ at Neue Nationalgalerie

Week 8

March 19, 2024

Seeing Action: War and Photojournalism // Vietnam War

Read:

Excerpt from Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York, N.Y: Picador, 2003

Browse:

Scott Anderson, “Fractured Lands: How the Arab World Came Apart,” *The New York Times*, August 10, 2016, sec. Magazine, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/08/11/magazine/isis-middle-east-arab-spring-fractured-lands.html>

March 25 – April 1 Spring Break

Week 9

April 2, 2024

Anti-War Neo-Avantgarde // The

Read:

Excerpt from Bryan-Wilson, Julia. *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

Recommended

Matthew Israel, *Kill for Peace: American Artists against the Vietnam War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013).

Lucy R. Lippard, *A Different War: Vietnam in Art* (Seattle: Whatcom Museum of History and Art ; Real Comet Press, 1990).

Week 10

April 09, 2024

Studio Visit and Discussion with Artist Sung Tieu

Week 11

April 16, 2024

Seeing Action: War Media, War Art // Gulf War and War on Terror

Read:

Excerpt from Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, Indiana University Press, 1995

Week 12

April 23, 2024

Images as Cure // Art and Trauma

Read:

Excerpts from Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*, Radical Thinkers (London New York: Verso, 2016).

Browse:

Brandon, Laura. "War Art as Memorial, War Art as Memory." In *Art and War*, 118–30. Art And. London: I. B. Tauris, 2007.

Recommended

Excerpts from Sue Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain, and the Great War: Witnessing, Testimony, and Remembrance* (New Haven: London: Published for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2004).

Week 13

April 30, 2024

Images as Injury // Propaganda

Read:

Excerpt from: Mitchell, W. J. T. *Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to the Present*. Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Browse:

Schnapp, Jeffrey T. "The Art of Propaganda (1920-45)." In *The Artistic Culture between the Wars*, edited by Valerio Terraroli, 171–80. Milan: Skira, 2006.

Week 14

May 7, 2024

War, Loot, and Cultural Heritage

Read:

Excerpt from Joselit, David. *Heritage and Debt: Art in Globalization*. October Books. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2020.

Browse:

Edsel, Robert M., and Bret Witter. *The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History*. New York: Center Street, 2009.

